



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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**March 14, 2001**

**To:** Tom Fitzsimmons, Director  
Department of Ecology

**From:** Gary Locke, Governor

**Subject:** Approval to declare a drought emergency

I approve the recommendations of the Department of Ecology, the Energy-Water-Salmon Task Force, and the Executive Water Emergency Committee to declare drought conditions for the state of Washington and hereby direct you to issue the necessary orders to that effect.

With the water supply for virtually the entire state forecast to be 65 percent of normal or less for April through September, there clearly is a strong possibility of undue hardship to water users. Clearly, Washington is facing the most serious water shortages in a quarter-century.

This is especially the case in the Yakima River basin, where pro-ratable irrigation districts face the prospect of receiving less than one-third their usual supply of water. Likewise, the mainstem of the Columbia River may see record low flows for the summer months, leading to the possibility that irrigation on many thousands of acres may need to be curtailed. The actions available to Department of Ecology under this drought declaration should alleviate some of the hardships caused by these drought conditions.

Fish also are at great risk this year due to low flows in many rivers and tributaries. I encourage the Department of Ecology to cooperate with other state agencies, federal agencies, tribes, and water users across the state to anticipate and minimize these effects.

Throughout the coming months, I ask the Department of Ecology and other agencies to keep me informed about the latest drought conditions and the effects the drought is having on our citizens and our natural resources. Together, I want us to make sure people have the information and assistance they need to survive this drought in the best shape possible.